

PREAMBLE AND CONSTITUTION

OF THE

NEW ENGLAND SOCIAL REFORM SOCIETY.

At a meeting of the friends of Social Reform, held in Boston, on Wednesday evening, Jan. 31, 1844, it was voted to form a Society to assist in carrying into practical operation the Community of property partially commenced in Skaneateles, N. Y. The following Resolutions, Preamble, and Constitution, being adopted, the officers for the ensuing year were then chosen:

President—TYLER PARSONS.

Vice Presidents—ICHABOD LINDSEY, JOSIAH P. MENDUM, GEORGE EMMONS, GEORGE W. TAYLOR.

Corresponding Secretary—HORACE SEAVER.

Recording Secretary—JAMES B. RICHARDS.

Treasurer—ROMANUS EMERSON.

Counsellors—Abijah Tewksbury, John Codman, M. E. Pettis, Alexander Mann, Mrs. H. C. Cummings, Miss E. Mann, L. S. Keith, H. H. Nichols, Sewall Barker, Mr. Griggs.

RESOLUTIONS.

WHEREAS, a number of men and women have actually commenced a new system of Society, in accordance with the laws of our nature, by means of a Community of property and interest, at Skaneateles, Onondaga County, (New York;) and whereas, it must be apparent to every one, acquainted in the least with this subject, that very considerable means will be necessary to commence and carry on operations upon such a scale as shall secure the desired object,—therefore,

Resolved, That in our opinion the time has now arrived when it is the duty of every well wisher of his race to take an active part in this most benevolent and comprehensive undertaking, and by well directed efforts on our part, convince those more immediately engaged in this work of love, that both their movement and their motives are appreciated by a portion of their fellow men, and that we will use our best endeavors to bring to their assistance the sympathy and co-operation of all those who desire the happiness of mankind.

Resolved, therefore, for this purpose, we recommend to all the friends of Social Reform, wherever situated, to commence at once, and raise by voluntary donations, in sums, at least, of fifty dollars each, ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS, immediately if possible—if not, one half to be paid in 1844 and the other half in 1845, to be applied, first to the purchase of the necessary land from the present private property system, and restore it back to Nature, the only rightful land-owner, and next to the erection of the necessary buildings, machinery, &c., by which our Skaneateles friends may be relieved from that anxiety they would otherwise experience; that after years of toil and self-denial, the fruits of their exertions would not be enjoyed by those for whom it was intended, viz., the HUMAN FAMILY.

Resolved, That we further recommend to the friends of Universal Reform, throughout the country, to organize, forthwith, for the purpose of discussing the principles of a Social Reorganization, to sustain agents, publish tracts, and correspond with each other, that a lively interest may be sustained throughout the country.

Resolved, That to give those among us an opportunity of aiding in this great plan of human redemption, whose pecuniary inability forbids giving fifty dollars within the time specified, we advise that subscription books be opened to receive any amount such friends can give.

Resolved, That this Society would recommend to all those interested in Social Reform to become subscribers to the "COMMUNIST," the organ of the Skaneateles Community, that while it is free to all, "without money and without price," yet its publication depends

entirely upon the subscription or donation of its readers—therefore we would recommend to each subscriber to forward at least one dollar for twenty-six numbers.

PREAMBLE.

WHEREAS, we believe that the complicated evils under which we suffer, proceed from man's ignorance of the eternal and unchanging laws which govern him; and whereas the rise of empires and downfall of nations—the long and continued history of bloody wars between the kingdoms of the earth—the constant changing and modifying of governments, with their enginery to resist force from without, and to quell revolt and rebellion within—the continued revolutions which are and have been produced in the ecclesiastical world, are living and most striking evidences of man's ignorance of the laws by which he should be governed; and whereas the human family constitute one universal brotherhood—a unit—a perfect and complete whole, having one common origin, interest and destiny;—that while this law of union, this oneness of interest is disregarded, harmony cannot exist; and whereas our social system has its foundation, neither in union nor love, but in a narrow and perverted selfishness, stimulating to action the selfish, cunning and base propensities, and giving no more exercise to the higher and nobler sentiments of our nature than is necessary to mitigate the evils thus produced; and whereas, since it is a known and established law in the material universe, that darkness can be expelled only by the introduction of light,—that cold can be overcome only by heat, and weakness subdued by strength, so this principle of antagonisms should be recognised in the moral world, by which vice can be overcome only by virtue, hatred by love, selfishness by benevolence, war by peace, and force by non-resistance; and whereas our social institutions are reared upon separate and individual interests, isolating each man from his fellow, forcing him, by the law of self-preservation, to stand centry against the entire race—to turn Ishmaelite, with his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him,—graduating his means of physical enjoyment, moral and intellectual improvement, by his superior skill in taking advantage of the necessities of the poor, in circumventing the ignorant,—in a word, it places his success in life upon his superior mental and physical ability to gather from the producing classes the fruits of their toil; and whereas this separate and individual interest has created rich and poor, capitalists and laborers;—that to protect the few capitalists from the plundered many, separate nations, with all their paraphernalia of death, have had their origin—that this inequality, this disparity of possession has given rise to most of the internal strife, which has, more or less, characterised every government on the face of this great storehouse of sorrow and suffering, called earth, and that these various nations, to protect their separate national interests, have generated wars, which have, not only impoverished the masses, but deluged this globe in human blood, by the destruction of fifteen thousand millions of human beings, eighteen times the present population of this globe; and whereas the state legitimatizes, and the church sanctifies the inequality of women, while public sentiment closes from them every avenue to wealth and enterprise, producing tyranny in one class, and dependence and servility in the other, creating physical and mental imbecility; and whereas our social duties may be embraced in the following sentence, viz.:—"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even the

same unto them;" and whereas society not only discourages the practical application of this sublime and ennobling precept, but, on the contrary, encourages fraud, deception and crime;—and whereas labor-saving machinery, and all scientific improvements, adapted, in a true social condition, to exonerate man from the toil and excess of burdens to which he is now necessarily subjected, are converted into instruments of tyranny and oppression,—they surfeit the market,—they diminish the demand for hand labor,—they throw many, entirely out of employment;—they reduce the wages and means of support among those having employment; and whereas this individual interest has robbed the people of the soil and its products, their birthright, by which the whole of life is a struggle to live, requiring all their power to resist the overwhelming and multiform encroachments of capital; and whereas, if man has an inalienable right to life, it legitimately follows that he has an inalienable right to that which can alone sustain life—that all withholding from the destitute the necessities of life and means of enjoyment, unless they have an equivalent to give in exchange, is a practical denial of this principle; and whereas if there was no individual and absolute proprietorship in the earth and its products, there would be no buying and selling, and hence no temptation to fraud, theft, slavery, piracy, or war; and whereas the principle which recognises the legitimacy of individual and absolute ownership in the soil and the products of human industry, by which these become the objects of *speculation, of barter and sale*, is the greatest outrage that can be inflicted upon the race, and is the fruitful source of all the evils of civilized society; and whereas in our present isolated society, with its enormous outlay for separate labor, buildings, teams, fences, fuel, &c., with but one quarter of society, producing any thing that is really valuable—so boundless and inexhaustible are the resources of the earth, that there is, if equally enjoyed by all, enough to satisfy the wants of the entire community; and whereas, when the people shall unite in communities, and all become producers, and, without infringing upon the rights of the individual—take advantage of labor-saving machinery, and all the economies of associations, superseding by this unity and oneness of interest, the necessity for governments of force, with their armies and navies, prisons and gibbets, for a hiring priesthood, for speculators, bankers, and all other supernumeraries, then the productions of the earth will be so abundant that no one need take thought, saying, "What shall I eat, or what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?"—then the end and aim of all man's efforts would be, not to accumulate as now, but to develop full and harmoniously his entire nature; and whereas the human mind is in its nature progressive and adapted to receive, appreciate and follow the truth; and whereas this present selfish and isolated society, not only discourages progression, but forbids it, threatening as a penalty, both reputation and living, thus offering the greatest possible encouragement to the practice of deception, hypocrisy and intolerance; and whereas the three learned professions have their origin in the infraction of the physical, mental and social laws of our nature, and the instincts of self-preservation lead them rather to perpetuate than to destroy the cause of their existence; and whereas written, traditional and oral authorities, creeds and sects, governments of force and political parties, are checks to freedom of thought, and freedom of action—(indispensable to intelligence, purity and peace;) and whereas every thought has its foundation in a material organ of the brain—that man's character is the product of the physical constitution and the peculiar organization of the brain which he receives at birth, together with his education and the combined influences which surround him from birth to death,—it therefore follows, that all rewards and punishments, other than those which inhere in man, and follow his act—all praise and blame are unnatural and artificial excitants which tend to vitiate and deprave rather than to purify and exalt his mind; and whereas the idea which so universally obtains that

man is morally, mentally and physically depraved—that vice, ignorance and indolence are the natural product of his being, and that virtue, intelligence and industry are exotics, and not the legitimate and natural fruit of all true minds; and whereas if man's nature is adapted to health, virtue and intelligence, it follows, that when society is constituted so as to harmonise with the wants of his being, disease, vice and ignorance must soon disappear; and whereas all human action, which is not mechanical, arises from the strongest motive in the mind of the actor, therefore one great object of reform should be to remove all temptation to idleness, selfishness and vice, and to give encouragement to industry, benevolence and virtue; and whereas a healthy and vigorous organization is absolutely indispensable to clearness of mind, to purity and benevolence of character; and whereas the present mode of slaying animals to satisfy man's perverted appetite, not only adds immensely to his labor,—predisposes his person to disease,—stimulates his selfish and combative propensities,—awakens into life and activity his lustful passions,—vitiates his entire constitution,—gives the animal the ascendancy over his moral and intellectual nature, but is supremely selfish, acting, as he does, upon the principle that might makes right—the principle which governs all tyrants—cruel in the highest degree to the animals—familiarises his mind with suffering and fits, and prepares him to exercise cruelty over his own species; and whereas we believe that a true state of society can be predicated upon the unchanging laws of man's nature, by which an equality of rights and a oneness of interest may be secured to all, and to obtain this most desirable end, and to examine into the nature and truth of all the propositions above enumerated, we form ourselves into an Association to be governed by the following

CONSTITUTION.

ARTICLE I.—This Association shall be called *The New England Social Reform Society*.

ARTICLE II.—The objects of this Society shall be to secure and make known to the public, information touching the evils of the present social system—to aid in perfecting, as a model Society, the Community partially established at Skaneateles, (New York,) upon the principle of a community of property and interest, whose government is based not upon physical force but reason and moral suasion, unencumbered by organised churches, sectarian priests, and the authority of all books and creeds, to the end that confidence may be secured and all doubts removed in the public mind, as to the practicability of the community movement.

ARTICLE III.—The officers of this Society shall be a President, four Vice President, Corresponding Secretary, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, and a Council of twelve members, the whole of whom shall constitute an Executive Committee, and to whom the business of the Society shall be committed. Five of the Committee shall constitute a quorum.

ARTICLE IV.—It shall be the duty of the President, Vice Presidents, Secretaries, and Treasurer, to perform faithfully the duties usually incident to such offices.

ARTICLE V.—The Executive Committee shall have power to fill all vacancies in its own body, employ agents, publish tracts and periodicals, and to make use of the most vigorous and efficient measures within their power to disseminate information on the evils of our present condition and the true system of communities. To enable them to do this, they shall have power to raise and disburse funds according to their best judgment. From the record of their doings the Committee shall make out and submit to the Society a Report of their business and financial operations of the preceding year at each Anniversary of the Society, which shall be holden on the third Tuesday of May, in the city of Boston. There shall also be Quarterly Meetings of the Society holden on the second Tuesday in August, November, and February, at such place as the Executive Committee shall designate. The Committee shall also hold a Business Meeting on Sunday evening of each week.

Boston, March, 27/44

My dear Mrs Chapman,

I could not believe it possible that I should remain in about Boston so long without calling to inquire after the state of your health & that of your sisters. But so it is. I expected to leave this P.M. for Manchester & probably shall not be back for 2 or 3 weeks & shall not be able to do myself the honor & pleasure to call & see you this time.

Please present my kind regards to your sisters.

Very respectfully yours

J. A. Collins



Mr. W. Chapman

39 Summer St.

Boston

Mass.

1844

J. G. Folger